

Eddie McAninch Nov. '38 Woman gains insight in USSR

By JON LARSON
Post-Record Reporter

Eddie McAninch of Camas says people generally respond to the challenge of promoting world peace in one of two ways. They either turn their backs, or try to help. She has chosen the latter.

In October, she joined 100 other U.S. citizens in a 15-day visit to the USSR as part of the National Council of Churches observance of the Russian Orthodox Church's 1,000th anniversary.

McAninch will share details about her trip at the 10:30 a.m. worship service at St. John's Presbyterian Church Sunday.

On Tuesday, Nov. 15, she will talk again at a noon luncheon hosted by the church. Reservations can be made by calling 834-3281 by noon, Monday, Nov. 14. The cost for the luncheon is \$2.50.

The Russian Orthodox church anniversary marks the baptism of Prince Vladimir of Rus in Kiev in 988 A.D. and the beginning of Christianity in Russia.

Among the cities McAninch she visited were Moscow, Zagorsk, Leningrad and Kiev, visiting Russian Orthodox churches as well as Baptist, Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches as well as Hebrew synagogues and Moslem mosques.

Open home to visitors

To help further understanding between nations, she and her husband Edward, a longtime Camas physician, have opened their home to American Field Service students over the years, and continue to take exchange students on outings in the Pacific Northwest when they're staying in Camas.

A deep need exists for communication among nations, she said.

"Over the years it compounds and compounds and we learn to appreciate each other as individuals and human beings and that we're all in this together," she said.

For the last 15 years, McAninch has been involved with peacemaking concerns at her church, St. John's Presbyterian in Camas. She's also active in the Beyond War group and Physicians for Social Responsibility, two groups intent on steering the world away from atomic holocaust.

Working though the problem of how to become a peacemaker in a warlike world left McAninch with a sense of personal peace, she said.

"I think I just feel better about myself, with my own conscience, doing what I can to get the arms race turned

around and draw attention to the obscene numbers of nuclear weapons on both sides," she said.

"We are capable of killing each other many times over and that's not rational. So, let's get rational," she said.

WW II remembered

In whatever city she stayed, McAninch often arose at 5:30 a.m. to stroll streets near the hotel.

She could not walk two blocks without seeing some kind of reminder, great or humble, in memory of the millions of soldiers and civilians who died during what the Soviets call "The Great Patriotic War" — World War II.

The Russian people underwent a tremendous amount of sorrow and suffering while under attack from Nazi Germany and don't want experience it again, she said.

It's easy for visitors to think the Russians are wallowing in the sorrow of the war, but its effects were so devastating and its destruction so widespread that no one of that generation was left untouched by it, she said.

Near Leningrad, McAninch visited a cemetery for 500,000 people resting in unmarked graves. The cemetery was 1.5 miles long and one mile wide and recorded solemn music was played over a sound system.

New freedoms observed

McAninch said church officials and believers "stand bewildered, incredulous, thankful and grateful," for the freedoms they are experiencing under the "glasnost" (openness) and "perestroika" (restructuring) under leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Church leaders are encouraging their congregations to enjoy the new freedoms while they can in case a change in policy occurs.

The USSR's communist government is still atheist, but now freedoms eliminated since the Revolution and Stalin's reign are being restored.

Infant baptism is practiced openly and without the punishments of the past. Formerly, parents who wanted their children baptized had to surrender the passports which allowed them to travel within the country. They also suffered by being demoted to jobs beneath their skill levels.

More churches are becoming churches again after years of use as museums, a practice instigated by Stalin.

Bibles are much more readily available than in years past and more are being printed within the USSR as well as being brought in the country.

But some aspects of religious life in the USSR have not changed. Parents are still not allowed to teach their children about their faith. That task has been assumed, though, by the babushkas — the Russian grandmothers.